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SUBJECT: PRT NINEWA: MOSULIYYA IN A MUDDLE: PRESSURE ON
U.S.-BACKED STATION INTENSIFIES

Classified By: Acting Ninewa PRT Leader Mark Schapiro for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (U) This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

12. (C) SUMMARY: With a December 20 announcement to open a new satellite television station, Ninewa Provincial Governor Atheel al-Nujaifi publicized his festering battle with U.S.-supported station, al-Mosuliyya. Pointed inquiries about Mosuliyya's funding, contract status and ownership of its equipment highlight the fact that Nujaifi has long chafed at the station's status and coverage of provincial affairs. After a 2006 birth supported entirely by United States Forces (USF), Mosuliyya now faces an uncertain future as its contract expires in 2010 and the Governor with his own political agenda launches a rival station. Mosuliyya employees increasingly report politically-motivated harassment. This is likely to continue in the near term, while Ninewa's journalists are left scratching their heads over the rise in rhetoric. END SUMMARY.

NUJAIFI: IF I CAN,T HAVE YOU...

13. (C) On December 20, Ninewa Governor Atheel al-Nujaifi announced that his government would open a provincial public television station offering an "undistorted view" of the government. He stated that his decision was motivated by a concern that the transmission equipment being used by satellite channel Mosuliyya belonged to USF, who have not yet decided how to dispose of it after August 2010, when Mosuliyya's contract is expected to expire.

14. (C) Nujaifi has repeatedly expressed displeasure with Mosuliyya's coverage. Nujaifi's legal and media advisor told us on December 2, for example, that the governor was frustrated by the station's editing of Nujaifi's press conferences. Nujaifi himself told PRT Team Leader on December 9 that he considered Mosuliyya "biased" and that without USF support the station would close. Other than a current contract for 30 minutes of USF Information Operations (IO) broadcasting per day, the station has no other significant revenue stream. Repeated attempts by the PRT to assist station management in developing a business plan have failed. Currently, Mosuliyya is Ninewa's only satellite television station, and its daily 2100 newscast is the most watched in the province.

IRAQIYYA: FATAL ATTRACTION

15. (C) Nujaifi's ire is not Mosuliyya's only obstacle. The station is also locked in a bitter three year-old rivalry with Iraqi Media Network's (IMN) Iraqiyya television station, which shares the same plot of land. A December 23 Iraqiyya news story called Mosuliyya employees "American mercenaries." The next day, Iraqiyya cut Mosuliyya's electric line for "non-payment of bills." Several Ninewa journalists told us that although they had their suspicions, they could not conclude with any certainty whether Nujaifi and Iraqiyya were working together. Meanwhile, Iraqiyya officials have

declined to answer questions on the feud.

16. (C) COMMENT: Apparently frustrated by his previous effort to purchase Mosuliyya, Governor Nujaifi appears to have resorted to other tactics to exert greater control over media messaging in Ninewa. His announcement outing Mosuliyya as a USF-supported station was no accident, coinciding with his public establishment of a new station linked to the provincial government. Whether or not Nujaifi's agenda has had any recent effect on Iraqiyya's actions, the feud with neighboring Iraqiyya is likely to continue, increasing the pressure on Mosuliyya over the remaining months of its contract. The withdrawal of USF from Ninewa will bring with it the removal of Mosuliyya's equipment and financial lifeline, as it is currently unable to stay afloat on its own. Until August 2010, PRT and USF will continue to work to ensure Mosuliyya's continued journalistic freedom and attempted steps towards sustainability.

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